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AUTHOR Playko, Marsha A.; Daresh, John C.
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ABSTRACT

The Danforth Foundation Program for the Preparation of School Principals has recently been implemented at Georgia State University, the University of Alabama, and The Ohio State University, and it will soon be extended to another 11 universities across the United States. This article provides a brief description of a week-long specialized training institute that was developed and carried out at Ohio State during the summer of 1987. The institute sought to prepare a group of practicing administrators who were nominated by their districts to serve as mentors to a group of classroom teachers selected to participate in the Danforth Foundation Program for the Preparation of School Principals at Ohio State during the 1987-88 academic year. These designated mentors included 19 building principals, 3 assistant principals, 1 director of elementary education, and 1 superintendent. The objectives of the training were to familiarize participants with the goals of the program and with their responsibilities, and to develop personal and group understandings of the concepts, assumptions, and practices of mentoring. An agenda of the Danforth Mentor Institute is appended, along with a list of summary ideas related to mentoring in the Danforth program. (TE)

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A TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MENTORS

by

Marsha A. Playko
Administrative Assistant
Danforth Foundation-Ohio State University
Program for the Preparation of School Principals
Columbus, Ohio

and

John C. Daresh
Assistant Professor of Educational Administration
Department of Educational Policy and Leadership
The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

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A Project Report of the Danforth Foundation-Ohio State University
Program for the Preparation of School Principals
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A TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MENTORS

In the Fall of 1986, the Danforth Foundation announced its support of innovative programs designed to prepare future school principals in ways different from traditional approaches. The result of this was the Danforth Foundation Program for the Preparation of School Principals recently implemented in its first stage at Georgia State University, the University of Alabama, and The Ohio State University. This program will soon be extended to another 11 universities across the United States.

While training strategies used to prepare administrators at each of the participating institutions differ, the primary objectives of the Foundation Program remain constant:

1. To work with selected university faculties to think and act boldly in developing alternative programs for the preparation of principals, in collaboration with practicing school administrators;
2. To develop future principals' knowledge, attitudes, and skills about school leadership through methods not traditionally included in university programs;
3. To enable aspiring school principals to gain practical skills prior to accepting their first administrative positions.

Each participating university was encouraged to develop strategies and procedures that would address these aims in creative and diverse ways. However, some practices were adopted by all of the institutions. One of these was the reliance on practicing school administrators to serve as mentors to work with program candidates in teaching practical skills of administration and also in helping people who were candidates to form personalized visions of effective leadership behavior.

In this article, we will provide a brief description of the specialized training institute that was developed and carried out at The Ohio State University during the summer of 1987. The basic goal of the institute was to prepare a group of practicing administrators who were nominated by their districts to serve as mentors to a group of classroom teachers who were selected to participate in the Danforth Foundation Program for the Preparation of School Principals at Ohio State during the 1987-88 academic year.

Who Were the Mentors?

The administrators who were designated as mentors for the program had diverse backgrounds. Nineteen were building principals (five secondary, 14 elementary), three were assistant principals of high schools, one a director of elementary education, and one superintendent. Experience as administrators ranged from two to more than 25 years. Eleven mentors were men, and 13 were women.

All mentors were selected because, in the minds of sponsoring school district officials, they met the following criteria:

1. They had experience as a school principal (or assistant principal), and they were generally regarded by peers and superiors as effective in that role;
2. They demonstrated positive leadership qualities such as:
   a. intelligence;
   b. good communication skills;
   c. acceptance of multiple alternative solutions to complex problems;
   d. clarity of vision, and the ability to share that vision with others in the organization;
   e. well-developed interpersonal skills and sensitivities to the needs of others in the organization.
3. They would be able to ask the right questions of candidates, and not just provide the "right" answers all the time;
4. They demonstrated that they could accept "another way of

doing things," and avoided the temptation and tendency to tell candidates that the way to do something is "the way I used to do it;"

5. They expressed the desire to see people (administrative candidates) go beyond their present levels of performance, even if it meant that candidates might eventually be able to do things better than their mentors;
6. They modeled the principle of continuous learning and reflection;
7. They exhibited awareness of the political and social realities of daily administrative life, at least as it is found in one school system.

School districts assumed the responsibility for the initial nomination of mentors. The university facilitator reserved the right to reject any nomination, but he did not exercise this option.

The Training Institute

In return for their work, mentors were provided an opportunity to receive specialized training to help them in their guidance of administrative candidates during the 1987-88 academic year. This training came in the form of a week-long training institute held in Columbus at facilities provided by the Columbus City Schools. The stated objectives for this training event were:

1. To enable participants to understand the goals and objectives of the Danforth Principal Preparation Program at Ohio State.
2. To assist participating mentors in becoming familiar with their responsibilities and opportunities, and also to meet the other administrators who would serve as mentors.
3. To develop personal as well as group understandings of the concepts, assumptions, and practices of mentoring.
4. To develop awareness of personal strengths and limitations that may be called upon in the performance of the mentoring

role.

5. To consider differences that exist between programs that ask for increased field-based learning, and a program that encourages field activities along with personal professional formation, and also the role that mentors would play in the case of the formation process.
6. To work out the operational details related to the implementation and continuing monitoring of the Ohio State Danforth Program.

A variety of learning activities were utilized during the institute as a way to help the mentors achieve their personal goals and the objectives of the institute. University faculty and external consultants worked with the mentors and candidates who chose to attend the institute to understand such specific issues as how to develop better appreciation and understanding of experiential learning, the nature of Ohio State's administrator preparation program, adult learning principles, and individual personality styles and development. In the case of this last issue, for example, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) was administered and scored, and a trained consultant provided the mentors with an overview of the instrument so that individuals would be better able to interpret their profiles.

One particularly well-received session included a panel discussion involving two pairs of mentor-protegee relationships selected from outside the field of professional education. In one case, two Catholic priests were invited to share their perceptions of mentoring, and in the other case, two physicians talked about their mutually-supportive and beneficial relationship. In this way, examples of naturally-developed mentoring were demonstrated to those attending the institute.

A good deal of time during the week-long training session was also devoted to discussions between and among the mentors, the candidates, and university staff. The agenda for the week is included in Appendix A. In addition, operational guidelines to be followed throughout the course of the Danforth Principals' Preparation Program

during 1987-88 were also generated at the end of the institute (Appendix B).

Institute Outcomes

At the conclusion of each day of the institute, participants were asked to complete feedback forms to describe their reactions o that day's activities. Specifically, people were asked to respond to the following:

1. Write a statement which describes your feelings regarding the day's activities.
2. Describe any insights, skills, or information which increased in meaning for you today.
3. Reflecting on the day, what activity was most useful to you? Why?
4. Reflecting on the day, what activity was least useful to you? Why?
5. Any other comments, reactions, or suggestion?

While responses to these individual items were, of course, quite varied over the week and across the group, certain themes emerged as apparent strengths and shortcomings of the week's activities.

For the most part, people were very positive about what was done during the week. The single most popular activity was the panel discussion with the two pairs of mentors from outside the field of education. Not only were the participants in that session knowledgeable about their own preservice training, but they were also open and candid in their reflections concerning the value of mentoring relationships. One comment by an institute participant was illustrative of many other comments:

> The gentlemen this morning gave personal meaning to the mentorship relationship. They provided an added feeling of excitement to being a mentor. I look forward to developing a relationship like theirs (I hope) with the candidate from my district.

On the other side, there was not a single activity that appeared to be viewed negatively by the majority of institute participants. From a process perspective, however, several individuals commented on the fact that many of the sessions during the week appeared to move very slowly. Some indicated frustration over the fact that more things were not covered during the week.

In terms of insights, skills, or specific information which increased during the week, ideas that seemed to appear with frequency included the following:

1. Mentor-protegee relationships will not happen magically and overnight.
2. Practicing administrators expressed a desire to have had the opportunity to work with mentors when they were first moving into administrative roles earlier in their careers.
3. Most practicing administrators, as mentors, share the same concerns and expectations for their roles.
4. The opportunity to serve as a mentor is seen as something that is highly desirable.

Regarding suggestions for improvement, mentors and candidates were consistent in their calls for several improvements if future editions were planned for the institute. The most frequent of these suggestions called for candidates to be expected to attend the training sessions with their mentors. Because of the nature of the sharing that occurred and the analyses of interpersonal styles that took place during the week, many indicated that the pairing and matching of mentors and candidates would have been a powerful activity to take place during the week. As the institute was conducted, there was a strong expectation that all mentors should attend. Candidates were invited, but most chose not to participate in the institute.

Another idea shared by many institute participants was the belief that the group of mentors had to be maintained as a group throughout the year; there had to be an emphasis on this group meeting periodically to discuss common concerns and interests.

Next Steps

We have recently started to look at what took place during the 1987-88 school year implementation of the Danforth Principals' Program. We want to know more about the development of those who served as candidates, and also the potential future applications of mentoring as a part of preservice preparation, first year induction, and ongoing inservice education of school administrators. Two specific tasks have emerged for us.

First, we are carrying out an analysis of the mentoring experience through the conduct of in-depth interviews of a group of Danforth mentors who were identified by program candidates as being particularly helpful and available during the school year. We are now visiting with these mentors to determine such things as the ways in which these practicing administrators believed that the Danforth Program's mentorship component had a discernable impact on their personal perceptions of leadership, management, and administration, and whether or not they felt more fulfilled professionally as a consequence of their involvement in the Program. Also, mentors are being asked to make suggestions for additional ways in which future training activities--for mentors as well as candidates--may be improved.

We hope that the findings from our research on mentoring in the Danforth Program cadre at Ohio State will also serve to guide the second activity in which we are currently involved. One of the things we have seen quite vividly during this past year was that mentor-protegee relationships have a great potential for improving preservice training for educational administrators. In addition, however, we also believe that mentoring is a process that may be institutionalized as a central feature of a comprehensive, first year induction program designed to meet the needs of beginning school administrators. Also, we see the possibility of mentoring serving as a part of ongoing inservice education opportunities that would be

available to all administrators, regardless of their levels of experience.

Another important insight that we have gained as a result of our experiences this past year is the fact that mentoring needs to be viewed as a special skill that may not be owned by most practitioners. Good principals, for example, may not necessarily good mentors (although we also believe that good mentors must be good principals). Even those administrators who might demonstrate and possess the basic skills and competencies viewed as needed by effective mentors might do well to receive additional training that might help them to realize how to make the best use of those talents. As a result, we are currently planning additional training activities that would be targeted to practicing administrators who would be available to serve as mentors to beginning colleagues, and also for school leaders who are intent upon finding ways to achieve personal future professional development activities.

The mentoring program has truly been an important part of the Danforth Foundation Program for the Preparation of School Principals at Ohio State. We believe that there is great value in what took place in this setting as part of the support services that may eventually leave the realm of "special" or "innovative" practices and become part of what is available to all future and present educational leaders.

APPENDIX A

DANFORTH MENTOR INSTITUTE AGENDA

Monday, August 10

[Morning Session, (9:00-12:00)]

- Introduction and Orientation to Course Organization and Objectives
- Status of Current Research on the Role of the Principal and School Effectiveness
- Development of Consensus Statements related to Effective Principals

[Afternoon Session, (1:15-4:30)]

- Leadership Assessment Grid Exercise
- Relationship of Leadership and Conflict Management
- Administration of Myers-Briggs Instrument
- Feedback and Review

Tuesday, August 11

[Morning Session, (9:00-12:00)]

- Psychological Types and Developmental Learning Issues

[Afternoon Session, (1:15-4:30)]

- Introduction to Professional Development planning
- Goals and Objectives of the Danforth Program
- Trends in Administrative Training (National Commission Report)
- Feedback and Review

Wednesday, August 12

[Morning Session, (9:00-12:00)]

- Introduction to the concept of mentoring (videotape/film)
- Role play: Begin planning for demonstration project
- Sharing of mentoring strategies

[Afternoon Session, (1:15-4:30)]

- Panel discussion of mentoring relationships and their relationship to professional development

Thursday, August 13

[Morning Session, (9:00-12:00)]

- The Use of Mentoring for Administrator Inservice and Preservice

- Review of Research on Mentoring

[Afternoon Session, (1:15-4:30)]

- Alternative administrator inservice models (REview of research and trends)
- Small group process activities to be used with candidates
- Action Plan Development/Role playing
- Alternative trends in Clinical Learning
- Feedback and Review

Friday, August 14

[Morning Session,(9:00-12:00)]

- Experiential Learning and Reflectiwe Journals

[Afternoon Session, (1:15-4:30)]

- Action Planning
- Sharing of Demonstration Projects
- Concluding Discussion: Next Steps

Summative Evaluation

APPENDIX B
(Continued)

13. The facilitator will assume responsibility for periodic updates on the progress of the program throughout the school year.

14. The facilitator will make an on-site visit to each candidate and mentor approximately each 6 weeks throughout the year.

15. Mentor-candidate dialogue needs to take place on a regular (i.e., as determined by each mentor and candidate) basis and deal with "formation" and "reflective" issues as well as "how-to-do-it" concerns.

16. Mentors and candidates should feel free to contact the facilitator with any comments, concerns, or questions about the program.

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY IDEAS RELATED TO MENTORING IN THE DANFORTH PROGRAM

1. Each candidate will have two mentors. The primary mentor will be from his/her sponsoring school district. The second mentor will be selected from among the other mentors around Franklin County. Although the facilitator will take initial responsibility for matching the candidates with their "second" mentors, the candidates and mentors will be able to make the final decision concerning compatibility and willingness to work with each other.

2. Each mentor in the County will have one or more candidates. If possible, the maximum number of candidates assigned to any mentor will be two.

3. Mentoring relationships are meant to be ongoing contacts between mentors and candidates. There is nothing to prevent individual candidates for contacting any mentor in the contact for an occasional visit to a school or district. In fact, it is understood that a responsibility for mentors will be to serve as a "contact person" in districts where the candidates may wish to visit.

4. Mentors (and candidates and the facilitator) will share materials of interest to other mentors and to the candidates. Those having material to distribute to others should do so by directly contacting people on the Program rosters.

5. Candidates will meet together as a collegial support team at least once each month through the 1987-88 school year.

6. The mentors and the program facilitator will have one "business meeting" each quarter of the school year.

7. Candidates will be asked to keep logs and reflective journals to document their activities and learning throughout the year. The extent to which this material (and any other diagnostic/reflective material kept in each candidate's file) shall be shared with mentors is a matter to be discussed and negotiated between the candidates and the mentors. The material contained in a candidate's file shall be understood as the property of the candidate, with the ongoing understanding that the facilitator will have access to all such materials but may not decide to make them available to others without the permission of the candidate.

8. Candidates may (and are encouraged to) visit other administrators in the county who may possess special skills that will be of interest to the candidates. These administrators might not be designated as mentors in this program.

9. Candidates will be expected to visit grade levels, schools, and school districts other their own.

10. Danforth funding will be used to support inservice activities that will be open to candidates and mentors. It is anticipated that such activities will be provided approximately once each month.

11. Candidates, with assistance of the facilitator, will be responsible for specifying their individual learning objectives to be attained through this program. While it is understood that these objectives are likely to change throughout this year, they should be sufficiently well-developed to serve as the basis for initial contacts and discussions between the candidates and their mentors in the fall of 1987.

12. Some form of incentives (limited) will be provided for the mentors who continue to work with the program throughout the year.